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SUBJECT: CORFU PROCESS GETS UNDERWAY

¶1. (C) Summary: At the first informal meeting of the OSCE's Corfu Process on European security, PermReps reiterated their vision of the process and touched on the role of international law in the OSCE area. Most agreed that the process needed to remain firmly rooted in the OSCE, encompass the three OSCE security dimensions (hard security, human and economic) and that current OSCE political commitments, which need to be fully implemented, should be as binding as international legal obligations. Stepping back to Russia's original position, the Russian Ambassador proposed a second security track that would result in a binding European security treaty, but no other delegation offered support. The CiO's conclusions further emphasized that there is no agreement on "spheres of influence," that OSCE commitments, norms and principles remain valid, and that implementation of them is the next step to address. Subsequent discussion at the NATO caucus reflected broad satisfaction at the course of the first meeting and the process now underway. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Greek PermRep Marinaki as OSCE CiO opened the first of ten informal meetings of OSCE PermReps on September 8 to undertake a dialogue on the "Corfu Process (CP)," a comprehensive review of European security. In her opening remarks she reiterated that the goal of the discussions was to take a fresh look at the principles and commitments that underpin European security with the possible outcome of a decision and/or declaration at the December 1-2 Athens Ministerial. Director of the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Center, Ambassador Herbert Salber, then made a brief presentation that traced the arc of OSCE's three stages of development and the build-up of the acquis of international and OSCE commitments in the security, economic and human dimensions. His reference to his personal experience at the OSCE in 1982 when the situation seemed "hopeless" but eventually turned into a success struck a positive chord that delegations repeated throughout the session.

¶3. (SBU) Most delegations reaffirmed generally shared goals that the CP should be comprehensive, cover all three dimensions and remain anchored in the OSCE. They also mostly agreed that the existing body of commitments, notably those from the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and the UN Charter, should provide an adequate basis for enduring European security if only they are properly and appropriately implemented. Such implementation, they stressed, requires adequate political will. The majority of delegations also drew little distinction between international legal commitments and political commitments in terms of how binding they are on participating States.

¶4. (SBU) Striking a discordant note was the lengthy intervention by Russian Ambassador Azimov. While constructive in tone and appreciative of the CP, he repeated Moscow's initial position before Corfu that there are two separate, parallel processes: the CP and another one leading to a European security treaty. The CP, he agreed, should be comprehensive and anchored in the OSCE, and it will be an opportunity for constructive debate and dialogue, but it is

neither a substitute nor a replacement for the EST. The EST discussions, on the other hand, should be focused on hard security, result in legal binding commitments, and be launched at an international meeting of heads of state and regional security organizations that the Russians will host in Moscow.

¶ 15. (SBU) Azimov saw the CP as a three-fold process: to better understand concerns; to identify problems and lacunas (gaps) in the European security architecture; and to suggest concrete measures to restore trust and bridge gaps in security (i.e., the OSCE process as an "international intellectual laboratory for the Euro-Atlantic region" in devising ideas and solutions). He went on to say that the OSCE could

enrich the dialogue on similar topics in other forums and that Russia supports the Greek list of topics provided the agenda is flexible and open for the possible introduction of other topics. He surprised many delegates by saying that Russia looks forward to a decision at Athens on the CP for 2010 which sets the agenda, particularly with bench marks.

¶ 16. (SBU) The Kazakhstani ambassador thanked the Greeks and Finns for their work as CIOs and praised Medvedev's proposal for paving the way to additional ideas. He also argued that an incomplete understanding of the specifics of a region led to negative experiences like the one Salber described in his presentation when he headed up the OSCE Office in Kazakhstan and said he found that Kazakh expectations were disappointed by what they perceived as constant criticism and being pushed to do things they did not want. (Comment: This "specifics of the region" argument is used by Kazakhstan and other CIS

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countries to justify the lack of enthusiasm and/or readiness for "western-style democracy" in their countries.) The Kazakh ambassador also said that new approaches and attitudes are needed to have a structured dialogue on European security - not just fact finding. His reference to a "window of opportunity" quickly became a mantra for other delegates. He said that as incoming CIO, Kazakhstan will invest to take the dialogue further, but argued that delegations must come to the Athens ministerial with an "extensive list of issues to develop further."

¶ 17. (SBU) Speaking in her national capacity but with the support of other EU members, the Swedish Ambassador said that concrete steps are important and that the process must be comprehensive, transparent, and anchored in the OSCE. She claimed that the existing structures had served Europe well and that the aim of the process should be an "OSCE plus" not OSCE "a la carte." The OSCE has a unique and comprehensive set of norms, but strict adherence to or implementation of them was the most important principle.

¶ 18. (SBU) In her summing up, Greek Ambassador Marinaki stressed that what she heard from the discussions was the continued validity and vitality of all OSCE norms and principles - "there is no need to redraft them." Implementation of commitments is lagging, she said, due to different interpretations and applications. All commitments, either legal or political, have equal standing and should be accorded equal value and weight in implementation. Such implementation, she concluded, requires political will stemming from common purposes and goals - with an emphasis on "common." She went so far as to state - while the Russian ambassador was out of the room and the chair was empty - that there is no agreement on "spheres of influence." The next step will be to ask what kind of effective mechanisms are needed to secure common implementation of commitments.

Chewing the Fat at the NATO Caucus

¶ 19. (C) The next day, September 9, at the NATO Caucus, Allied Ambassadors reviewed Tuesday's discussions and the outlook for the second CP session on September 15. Although a few

expressed dismay at the Russian intervention insisting on a second track of discussions leading to a binding European security treaty, most, including the representative of the Greek CIO, dismissed Azimov's remarks as dutifully following President Medvedev's call for a treaty. The Greek representative, going a step further, pointed out that such an alternative process as Azimov sketched out required partners, and, as the CP discussions demonstrated, partnership was only to be found within the CP framework. Several Ambassadors asked about prevailing attitudes toward Russia's proposal for a meeting of the Secretaries-General of five regional security organizations (NATO, CSTO, EU, OSCE, CIS) but most others dismissed the concept while mentioning that if there is a gathering it should also include the Council of Europe, which would emphasize the priority placed on the human dimension of security in Europe. Many delegates commented on the fact that the tone of the discussion had changed and that even Russia seemed to be participating in its own "constructive" way. Russia may have started the CP process, but the delegates now need to "own" it and make proactive, concrete suggestions. The UK summed up the more positive view of the process by positing that Russia has reason to have a good outcome in Athens and really has no alternative to the OSCE: "We should have confidence in our positive agenda; if they don't like it, it's their problem, not ours."

FULLER